

Leading Argentine Viticulture

An Interview with Juan Pablo Murgia, Winemaker, Bodega Argento



Juan Pablo Murgia

EDITORS' NOTE *Juan Pablo Murgia has played a key role in the promotion and communication of Argento sustainable principles. He is the Technical Director of Grupo Avinea and manages five wineries, with a special focus on Bodega Argento (Imported by Pacific Highway Wines) and the southernmost winery on the planet, Otronia (imported by New*

Frontier Wine Co.). Murgia has cemented his position in the wider wine community as a visionary, playing an instrumental role in bringing Argentine wines to a wider global audience.

COMPANY BRIEF *Bodega Argento's vineyards are located in Argentina's traditional regions of Mendoza and the Uco Valley. Each place is unique and has a story to tell, which is why the company works to consider climate and soil in order to preserve everything that gives identity to its wines. Bodega Argento takes care of the grapes and works in the most natural way possible. At the winery, it seeks to preserve the best of the terroir; use oak in a balanced way, and avoid over-extraction to maintain purity, freshness and elegance in each of its organic wines.*



Argento vineyard in Argentina



Will you discuss the history and heritage of Bodega Argento?

In 2012, we began to write a new chapter in our history with the premise of leading the production of organic and sustainable wines to preserve in each bottle the best of this region, which has a dry climate and alluvial soils, mountain water, high-altitude, and sun brightness. Our purpose was to lead Argentine viticulture in a sustainable way, respecting our environment and developing brands of high perceived value. We work to take care of natural resources and use organic production to express and preserve the best of our region through different grape varieties and places. Today, Argento leads the organic production of wines in Mendoza with more than 322 hectares of organic vineyards in Agrelo, Paraje Altamira, Ugarteche, Carrizal, and Cruz de Piedra.

What have been the keys to the growth and leadership of Argento in the industry?

The keys are our philosophy, mission, and vision as a company to manage our vineyards. We truly believe that the fruit that comes from a vineyard in agroecological balance with all the surrounding living compounds is a richer fruit in terms of grape and terroir expression, flavors, and color. On the other hand, with a strong commitment to ecology and sustainability, and caring about the world, we will leave to our children a strong enough reason to make things this way.

Bodega Argento is committed to sustainability. Will you highlight this focus and Argento's sustainability initiatives?

Sustainability is a diverse concept and in our company we create an independent area to work and focus exclusively on sustainability. Our sustainability concept has strategic pillars:

- Natural resources administration (water, energy, waste management): we measure every resource and manage them in order to save as much as we can with high efficiency.
- People: we strongly consider our people's work conditions and our community, so we decided to follow the Fair Trade program in all our vineyards and winery.
- Land: this is maybe the origin of our inspiration and philosophy, and of course, agroecological management is the way to make things, under the Organic certification.
- Business: working hard to maintain a healthy business is part of the sustainability of the project. After all, it is our job, what we do for a living, and we try to develop a healthy business, of course.

What do you feel people should know about the strength of the Argentine wine industry?

People should know that even though Argentina is a new world wine country, we have a strong history that our grandparents set more than a century ago and

nowadays this industry is going through a revolution in terms of quality and terroir identity, producing some of the best wines in the world, led by malbec but with other amazing grapes such as Cabernet Franc and Chardonnay.

The future of Argentina's wine industry is very promising because we are consolidating year after year our capability of making world-class wines.

How is technology impacting the wine-making process?

In high-end wines, our technology is focused on vineyards, especially in micro-terroir delimitation, soil characterization and mapping. Our high-end wines are made under artisanal processes in the winery and I am happy to keep it that way. In middle and entry-level wines, technology is a key factor because it always improves efficiency and quality.

Did you always know that you wanted to work in the wine industry and what has made the industry so special for you?

My grandfather was a viticulturist and winery owner. My father is a viticulturist and he introduced me to the vineyards during my childhood. When we would spend time together in the vineyards and winery, I was able to learn the philosophy of high-quality grapes and the care that goes into it all. I knew I wanted to be part of that and to continue paving the way for Argentine wines.

What are your priorities for Argento as you look to the future?

Of course, our biggest priority is to keep leading organic and sustainable wines in the future and focus on terroir identity pushing our wines into their deepest expression. The greatest wines in the world show places through the glass and this is what we are achieving nowadays in Argento. We are focused to keep going in that direction. ●

